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Weight training is for any age



In addition to strengthening muscles, weight training exercises can strengthen bones, lowering the risk of osteoporosis. The pull of tendon on bone (tendons attach muscle to bone) stimulates the production of calcium in the bone – no matter what your age.

Even those over ninety can still build muscle mass and increase their strength and endurance, as well as strengthen their bones.

Many of the symptoms we blame on aging are also symptoms of inactivity. Inactivity increases the risk for many disorders and diseases, thereby lessening the quality of life. There is a 3% decline in metabolism every 10 years after the age of thirty. However, the decline is 15% every 10 years if you are inactive. A slower metabolic rate can affect body weight, the efficiency of the body to absorb nutrients from food, and the effectiveness of the immune system.

Weight training is also ideal to increase metabolic rate, as muscle tissue is highly active even at rest. Stronger muscles also protect and support the body, and act as more efficient shock absorbers, thereby lessening the strain on joints (even arthritic ones!). Loss of muscle tissue makes joints and ligaments take on more

strain, making them susceptible to injury. Muscle strength is also necessary to keep the body properly aligned so that balance is not compromised: In our "golden years" we will be less likely to fall and injure ourselves.

As a general recommendation, weight training exercises can be done two days per week. Beginners should progress slowly. Start with short exercise sessions of perhaps 10-15 minutes. For the first few weeks, use little or no weight as you practise proper weightlifting technique.

Children can start early (using light weights) to build a strong foundation for future bone health. Heavy weights are not advised for children while their bones are still developing.

Weight training tips . . .

1. To get stronger and increase muscle size, lift heavier weights for three to four sets (groups) of fewer repetitions (six to eight). To improve muscle endurance and tone, lift lighter weights for three sets of higher repetitions (ten to 15).
2. Working muscles need oxygen, so never hold your breath as you weight train. A general rule is to exhale as you lift (when the muscle contracts or shortens) and inhale as you lower the weight.
3. Generally, females have stronger lower body muscles, due to a lower centre of gravity (wider hips). Men are proportionally stronger in the upper body because of wider shoulders and more muscle mass.
4. Always use a weight that allows completion of repetitions, without sacrificing good form.
5. Don't wear a weight training belt throughout your workout. A belt is only necessary for back support when lifting extremely heavy weights. The belt reduces compression forces on the spine, but it lessens involvement of back and abdominal muscles. Wearing a belt continually can cause weak, injury-prone muscles in the lower back and abdomen.
6. Free weights (barbells and dumbbells) effectively work all the stabilizing muscles connected to the main muscle you are exercising. Free weights will therefore provide a more whole-body workout and improve your balance.

However, weight training machines are preferred for safety reasons, and they can also isolate and target a muscle more effectively than free weights.

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